Newsletter Summer 2014

Editorial

The dying days of 2014 saw the long-awaited publication of the Research Excellence Framework results. Collectively, Scottish Informatics and Computer Science did well with most institutions improving on the parameters they had targeted. In terms of overall "research power" we saw the majority of Scotland's institutions holding their own or improving their relative position. The SFC investment in Research Pooling has certainly contributed to the ability of Scotland's institutions to compete effectively in the REF. The first phase of SICSA funding comes to an end in June 2015 to be succeeded by a new co-funded SICSA 2 that will continue the work of the research pool covering 14 Scottish HEIs. As I write, the revised consortium agreement is already in advanced draft stage.

The REF result is very positive for Scotland's institutions but it does contain some less positive messages. We still have much to learn about how to characterise our impact since for many institutions that is lower than we anticipated. One new development that can help us in improving our impact stories is the creation of the SFC-funded Innovation Centres. There are opportunities for interaction on Informatics and Computer Science with all eight centres but we believe there are very strong opportunities with CENSIS on sensor systems, DHI on digital health and The Data Lab on big data. SICSA now has representation from all three on our Advisory Board and we are in discussion on how pooling can improve the interaction between the Innovation Centres and Scottish researchers.

SICSA is particularly heavily involved in The Data Lab.

The appointment of its new CEO gives it renewed impetus and SICSA's Education Director is leading on the implementation of The Data Lab Education Programme that has launched multiple coordinated Masters programmes that will see their first students in September 2015. This is a great achievement given a very tight timescale from the award of The Data Lab. We look forward to a productive partnership between SICSA and The Data Lab.

Post-election, we can only expect a spending review that will see a reduction in UK science spending through the research councils and the Junckers initiatives in Europe have also seen movement of funds from Research towards Innovation and Employment. SICSA will work with the theme groupings to see that the mechanisms we have in place support the Scottish Institutions effectively to work together to maintain and develop Scottish Informatics and Computer Science research.

Our annual Graduate Academy PhD conference takes place in Glasgow June 24-25. This brings together PhD students from across Scotland and is one of the highlights of the SICSA event calendar. The Graduate Academy demonstrates the effectiveness of pooling in building collective strength through cooperation. Going forward the Graduate Academy will be an essential element in ensuring the health of our PhD community.

Professor Stuart Anderson, SICSA Director